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HOUSTON CITY HALL
901 BAGBY STREET
HOUSTON
HARRIS COUNTY
TEXAS

HABS No. TX-3226

P H O T O G R A P H S

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

NAME: HOUSTON CITY HALL

LOCATION: 901 Bagby Street (Oscar Holcombe Civic Center), Houston, Harris County, Texas bounded by Bagby Street (west), McKinney Avenue (south), and Walker Avenue (north). Brazos Street is closed on this block allowing the City Hall to face east directly onto Hermann Square.

OWNER: City of Houston
901 Bagby Street
Houston, Texas 77002

OCCUPANT: City of Houston, Administrative Offices

PRESENT USE: Seat of the municipal government, Houston, Texas.

SIGNIFICANCE: Houston's 1939 City Hall, fifth in the City's history, represents a number of architectural trends influential during the 1920s and 1930s in the United States -- most notably the Stripped-Classical Moderne style, setback skyscraper massing and abstractly stylized architectural ornament. Architect Joseph Finger was one of Houston's first and best designers in the Moderne manner, and in this building he achieved an appropriately monumental structure, intended as a symbol of Houston's stable yet progressive outlook. The siting of the building and its relationship to Hermann Square represent important city planning and landscape decisions. The urban space which resulted, a combination of park, pool and plaza, has continually served as a public meeting place for social, political and cultural activities in downtown Houston. For over forty years this building has served as the seat of Houston's municipal government.

PART I-- HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. The City Hall of Houston was completed in 1939 after fifteen years of planning interrupted by controversy and by the Great Depression. The first four municipal administration buildings (1841, 1872, 1876 and 1904) were located on Market Square in conjunction with the city market. (1) During the first term of Mayor Oscar Holcombe (1921-23) a nineteen story structure was proposed to replace the 1904 building on the Market Square site. (2) This was to have been a classically derived skyscraper topped with a choragic monument. However, before final plans were ever drawn, a movement was initiated to locate the new City Hall not in Market Square, but on a site near Buffalo Bayou, just west of the business district.

This location, across from Sam Houston Park and the Public Library, faced Hermann Square, a park willed to the City by George Hermann (1843-1914). (3) Arthur Coleman Comey had suggested in a planning report prepared in 1913 that a civic center be established in that general area. (4) But it was not until plans for a new City Hall were underway in 1923 that this suggestion was taken up by Holcombe and others when the City of Houston commissioned a plan for such a center with Hermann Square as a nucleus. Hare & Hare, landscape architects and city planners from Kansas City, had served as consultants on other Houston projects, were hired to pursue the civic center idea. (5) The first sketch prepared showed the library, not exactly as it was completed, but nevertheless in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style. Another six buildings were proposed, all in a Classical style and all facing Hermann Square. The City Hall design was modeled on the United States Capitol. It was to be a three story, I-shaped building with central pedimented portico and dome, located on two full blocks bounded by Bagby, Lomar, Brazos and McKinney. The second block which would have been taken is now the location of the new Houston Public Library.

A second scheme was considered more seriously than the first by the City Planning Commission. This showed all the buildings (five) in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style to blend with the library designed by Cram and Ferguson of Boston in 1922-23. In this plan, the site of City Hall was moved across Bagby and placed in Sam Houston Park still facing Hermann Square (which would have been lengthened by one block to include the site on which City Hall was finally built). Houston voters approved a bond issue for the new City Hall and Civic Center in 1927. In 1928 the City Planning Commission, chaired by Will C. Hogg, proposed that the second Hare & Hare scheme be adopted. James Ruskin Baily, Alfred C. Finn and Hedrick & Gottlieb were commissioned to design the new building for the city. (6)

In 1929 the architects' proposal was presented, but instead of the expected Spanish Renaissance styling, the building was a twenty-story skyscraper, modeled on the recently erected Los Angeles City Hall (1926-28) which was based on the Nebraska State Capitol designed by Bertram Goodhue. (7) This apparent conflict was resolved by the Great Depression. Not only was financing impossible, but Walter E. Monteith was elected mayor ending Holcombe's eight year tenure.

Mayor Holcombe's enthusiasm for a new City Hall kept the project alive. When he was reelected in 1933 it was not long before the issue was revived. Finally, in 1937, the City received assurance of a Public Works Administration grant of \$818,811, one-half of the estimated construction cost. (8) Dissension immediately erupted over the siting. The choice was between the block just west of Hermann Square (owned by the City) and the block just west of that (not owned by the City). The City Planning Commission, under the leadership of Hogg's protege, Hugh Potter, insisted that the 1928 plan already adopted by the Commission be retained, thus requiring the expansion of Hermann Square and purchase of the block facing Bagby Street. The City Council, under a new mayor, R. H. Fonville, favored the block west of Hermann Square as it was disinclined to purchase additional property. (9) The City Council prevailed. In this action on October 21, 1937, the Council also appointed a new architect, Joseph Finger, over the objections of the Mayor who felt the City still had an obligation to continue with the architects who had been hired in 1929.

Fanville's objections were even more vociferous when Finger presented his "ultra-modernistic" plan. Fanville and Finger argued before City Council where the Mayor made a strong plea in favor of keeping the original notion of harmonizing architectural styles, which would demand that City Hall be built in the Spanish Renaissance style. Finger countered, "We're building for the masses and not the classes." In his defense, which eventually won over City Council, Finger also said: "Here in America we are rapidly developing our own type of architecture, which is far above that of foreign countries." No design modifications were made in Finger's proposal which was adapted by City Council October 26, 1937. (11)

Thamas Bate & Sons obtained the general contract and ground was broken on May 7, 1938. On June 27, 1938, Fanville ceremonially riveted the first steel members into place. (12) The 1000-pound cornerstone was laid October 1, 1938. At a brief ceremony the Mayor dedicated the building "to the future good government of Houston," and placed a Bible, a copy of the city charter, copies of three daily newspapers, the 1937 city auditor's report and a treatise on democracy entitled "To the Houston Democracy of the Future" in a box sealed behind the cornerstone. Among those present were C. H. Van Ehman, chief resident engineer inspector for the PWA, the architects, Joseph Finger and his assistant, Roy W. Leible, and Col. David M. Duller, consulting engineer. (13)

With completion of the new \$1,750,000 facility, the Mayor and Council moved in on December 3, 1939. (14) Oscar F. Holcombe has just been elected to his seventh term as mayor, succeeding this time R. H. Fanville. Holcombe was appropriately the first Mayor to occupy the new City Hall, a building realized in part because of his persistent efforts. The first City Council meeting, held December 6, 1939, was reportedly filmed "for the city archives."

In 1939 a panel of representative "leading citizens" selected City Hall as Houston's most outstanding building in a survey conducted by Architectural Record. (16) Houston City Hall is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places (1976).

2. The architect was Joseph Finger (1887-1953) who had established a reputation far facility with the Moderne style. Born in Austria, Finger attended the Royal Institute of Technology in Vienna where he studied engineering and architecture. At age 18 he came to the United States, arriving in New Orleans in 1905. In 1908 Finger moved to Houston where he began his architectural career. In the early years of his practice he was associated with several other architects: 1908-09 (as a draftsman for Lewis Sterling Green); 1910-12 (as a draftsman for C. D. Hill & Co.); 1913-14 (as a junior partner in the firm Green & Finger); 1914-19 (as the senior partner in the firm Finger & Bailey with James Ruskin Bailey); 1920-22 (as senior partner in the firm Finger & Cato with Lamar Q. Cato). In 1923 Finger established a firm, Joseph Finger, Architects (later Joseph Finger, Inc.) in which he practiced until 1944 producing most of the work for which he is known. In 1944 Finger took in George Rustay as a partner and the firm's name was changed to Finger & Rustay. This association lasted until Finger's death. Joseph Finger also collaborated on some project with Alfred C. Finn whose late architecture was similar in style to Finger's. (17)

Joseph Finger's first major Moderne building, the style with which he was to become identified, was Temple Beth Israel (1925). In the 1920s Finger's buildings displayed a Zig-Zag Moderne style which reached its height in the Houston Turnverein Clubhouse (1929) which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In the 1930s Finger turned to the Streamline Moderne of which the Clarke & Courts Printing Company (1936) is the most outstanding example. In the Houston City Hall Finger's affinity for modernistic detail is tempered by his desire to express strength and solidity. Throughout his career Finger designed many large buildings, including hotels, office buildings, retail facilities, industrial plants, and institutional structures in Texas and Louisiana. The comparatively few houses he designed in and around Houston tended to be grand, but in a more traditional style.

Architect Roy Liebke, the head designer in Finger's firm, supervised construction of the City Hall. Artists involved included sculptors Herring Coe of Beaumont and Raoul Josset, a French man, who designed and executed the low-relief sculptural ornaments. Donald MacMorris, a well-known Kansas City artist who decorated the Nelson Art Galleries in that city, was commissioned to paint the ceiling mural of the lobby.

3. The building contractor was Thomas Bote & Sons of Denver, Houston and Dallas. Other sub-contractors were as follows: Wilhide Equipment Company, Dallas, equipment engineers and contractors; Williamson-Greer Co., Dallas, plastering contractor, Texas Quarries, Inc., Austin, stonework; Claude Everett, Inc., excavation; the Worren Co., Inc., plumbing, heating and air conditioning contractor; Acoustical Flooring & Construction Co., flooring contractor.

4. The following description was published in both the Houston Post and the Houston Chronicle on December 30, 1939:

"The exterior of the building presents modern, clean-cut lines of native Texas shell stone with sculptured panels and aluminum spandrels between the windows for the entire height of the building. The panels cut into the stone around the first floor level represent the agricultural products found in and around Houston. The panels around the fourth floor represent the industries of Houston while the upper panels near the top of the building picture the functions of the city government.

The solid walls on top of the building hiding the ungainly penthouses, vents and cooling towers are relieved by the carved heads of the Texas Bobcat.

Above the main entrances the stone is carved into symbols of the struggle of good government to bring order out of chaos.

The large doors of the main entrances are of aluminum grille work. Fitted into the grille work are the cast aluminum heads of the world's greatest lawgivers from ancient to early American times, including Akhenaten, Caesar, Moses, King John, Charlemagne and Thomas Jefferson.

All lobbies and corridors throughout the building are treated with marble base and marble walls and wainscoting. The wood trim and doors throughout the building are figured gum.

The main floor lobby and elevator lobby are elaborately decorated with murals and with marble, nickel and bronze trimming. Murals on the ceiling represent industry, culture, law and administration. In the center under hidden soft lights is a novel plaster relief of the Western Hemisphere with the star of Houston as its center. The Texas star is treated in the same way in the elevator lobby . . .

The entire area of the building is completely air conditioned. Two automatic high-speed elevators and one combination freight and passenger elevator serve all floors. The cabs of the elevators are a combination of walnut and prima-vera panels with concealed troughs of nickel and bronze. . .

Two flights of broad streamlined stairs of aluminum and marble lead to the second floor and the lavishly executed council chamber. This room is the most beautiful in the building. It has tall majestic windows and walls of blond walnut with panels of natural walnut, all finely matched. Massive lighting fixtures hang from the ceiling. Seats for the spectators are of beige leather upholstery. A large U-shaped council table of modern design is located at one end of the room on a slightly raised dais. The room will be equipped with a sound amplification system.

The mayor's suite of offices are located on the third floor and are also elaborately decorated...The basement corridors have walls of polished shell stone. A modern coffee shop, other offices and storage rooms are located in the basement...."

The original appearance of the building has not been changed since construction. Plans and specifications are located in the File Section, Department of Public Works, City of Houston. Numerous early photographs do exist, including an image of the original rendering by the architect which shows a one-point perspective looking across the reflecting pool in Hermann Square. (20)

5. With the exception of intermittent efforts to stabilize the building's foundation, the City Hall has undergone significant modification only once from 1972-1976. Plans for renovation were prepared for the administration of Mayor Louie Welch by Irving Klein and Associates, and improvements were begun in 1972. In early 1974 the program was revised in the course of execution by the succeeding administration under Mayor Fred Hofheinz to minimize modification of the character of the building's interior spaces. As a consequence, none of the principal interior spaces is significantly changed and most alterations have been confined to secondary spaces and mechanical and fire safety systems. (21)

In February 1981 plans were announced to renovate the Council Chamber installing new sound equipment, better lighting, and a new telephone system. The plan was designed by Morris Aubry Architects and Stone Construction Company received the contract with a bid of \$178,000. The original look of the room will remain unchanged.

NOTES

- (1) a. For a short history of Houston's City Halls see Houston: A History and Guide, 1942. pp. 246-248, 278-279.
b. Information file, Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library contains further information.
c. See photographs of these buildings in the supplementary material of this report.
- (2) a. Houston Daily Post. May 13, 1923. "Plans Call for a Splendid Municipal Building."
b. See photograph in supplementary material of this report.
- (3) For a complete history and description of Hermann Square see Houston Architectural Survey, volume I.
- (4) Camey, Arthur C. Houston: Tentative Plans for its Development. pp. 58-60.
- (5) a. Hare & Hare Collection (RGD26), Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.
b. Houston Review Vol III, n I (winter 1981). "Planning the City: An Interview with Rolph Ellifrit." pp. 204-219. Ellifrit worked for Hare & Hare and here gives added information about the development of the civic center plan and also the City Hall siting controversy.
- (6) a. Civics for Houston. Vol I, n I (Jan 1928) "Planning Commission Places Milestone." p. 9
- (7) Houston Post Dispatch. March 3, 1929 "Building Will Cost \$2,300,000."
- (8) a. Houston Press. August 24, 1937. "PWA OKEHS Grant of \$818,811 for New City Hall."
b. See excerpt from Tulsa Art Deco: An Architectural Era 1925-1945 included in supplementary materials of this report for a discussion of the PWA and the architecture it sponsored.
- (9) a. Houston Post. September 28, 1937. "Planning Board Recommends New Site for City Hall to Keep Original Civic Center Intact."
b. Houston Post. October 14, 1937. "City Selects Two Possible Sites for City Hall."
- (10) Houston Post. October 22, 1937. "Council Votes to Build New City Hall in Middle of Civic Center on Ground Between Caliseum and Public Library."

- (11) a. Houston Post. October 26, 1937. "Mayor Would Have Building Conform with Civic Center."
- b. Houston Post. October 27, 1937. "Council Backs Modernistic City Hall Plan."
- (12) a. Houston Chronicle. June 27, 1938. "City Hall Dedicated As Rivet Driven Home."
- b. Houston. Vol IX, n 6 (July 1938) p. 12. "City Hall Job Holds Riveting Ceremony."
- (13) a. Houston Chronicle. October 1, 1938. "Cornerstone for New \$1,650,000 City Hall is Laid in Brief Ceremony."
- b. Houston Post. October 2, 1938. "Box of Memories Sealed in City Hall Cornerstone."
- (14) a. Houston Post. December 3, 1939. "Holcombe and Council move to New Quarters."
- b. Houston Chronicle. December 3, 1939. "City Government Shifts to Modernistic Home."
- (15) Houston Chronicle. December 6, 1939. "Council Holds First Meet in Spacious New Chamber."
- (16) Architectural Record. Vol 86, n 5 (Nov 1939) p. 14. "Houston Citizens Vote on Recent Buildings."
- (17) a. Houston Chronicle. February 6, 1953. "Joseph Finger, Architect, Dies at 65."
- b. Houston Press. December 29, 1929. "Youth Who Came to Houston on Borrowed Funds Twenty-two Years Ago Now Is One of Leading Architects."
- c. Houston City Directory. Various years 1908-1953.
- d. New Encyclopedia of Texas, V II (ca 1926). pp 1232-33.
- e. Who's Who in Texas, 1931. p. 22.
- f. Conversation with Mrs. Joseph Finger, July 1981.
- (18) For photographs of many of Finger's buildings see Houston: An Architectural Guide.

See also the Houston Architectural Survey, 1980.

- (19)
 - a. Houston Chronicle. December 25, 1938. "Art Grovure Section."
 - b. Houston Chronicle. June 8, 1939. "Design for Decorotion for Lobby of New City Holl."
 - c. Houston Post. October 25, 1939. "Houston to See MocMorris Pointings Soon; Decorotive Motif Foshioned From Every Doy Life."
 - d. Houston Chronicle. November 5, 1939. "Art Grovure Section."
- (20) Houston Directory and Municipal Guide, 1940. "Commemoroting Houston's New City Holl" See copy in supplementary moterial of this report.
- (21) Notional Register Nomination Form. "Houston City Holl" (1976)
- (22) Houston Chronicle. Februory 12, 1981. "Stone Construction Submits Low Bid to Renovote City Hall -- \$178,000."

B. Historical Context

Ten different people have served as mayor since occupancy of this City Hall building: Oscar F. Holcombe (1921-29, 1933-37, 1939-41, 1947-53); Walter E. Monteith (1929-33); R.H. Fonville (1937-39); Neal Cornelius Pickett (1941-43); Otis Massey (1943-47); Roy Hofheinz (1953-55); Lewis W. Cutrer (1958-64); Louie Welch (1964-72); Fred Hofheinz (1972-76); and Jim McConn (1977-). Elected every two years, the mayors of Houston exert a strong influence on the city government. Each man serving in that capacity has brought to City Hall his own ideas, appointees and personal style which have shaped Houston.

In 1939 all major departments of the City government (excepting those such as Fire and Police which for obvious reasons have always had separate headquarters) were located in this building. On the second floor were the council chambers, public service, legal, civil service, and treasury departments. The Mayor and City Attorney's suites have always been on the third floor. The other seven floors originally housed the Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation, City Controller, Engineering, Commissioners' offices, Civil Service and PWA offices and the Department of Public Health.

Since 1939, as the population of Houston has grown with geometric progression, the city government has necessarily greatly expanded. In 1968 the City Hall Annex was completed across Bagby Street and tunnels were built to interconnect the annex, City Hall, Sam Houston Coliseum and the Civic Center. (The annex site was the alternate site for City Hall in 1937.) In 1981, with many City departments now located in the annex or their own buildings, City Hall houses primarily the Mayor and Council offices, the Public Service Department and the Purchasing, Tax and Treasury Departments and the City Controller's offices.

From its inception in the heart of the Depression, City Hall has seen Houston through World War II, the post war economic boom here, the Civil Rights Movement (during which the City Hall cafeteria was the first lunch counter in Houston to integrate in 1960), the technological advancements of the space industry centered in Houston, and now the difficult municipal management of the great population shift to the sunbelt.

The future holds no plans to move from or alter Houston's City Hall, as evidenced by the current plans for remodeling of Council Chambers which have carefully preserved the original interiors. The building will remain a symbol of government to Houstonians.

For further information see Houston, A History and Guide and Houston, The Bayou City.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

(The following description of City Hall was written by Stephen Fax for the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, and is included in this report with his permission.)

A. Description of Exterior:

The Houston City Hall exhibits many features typical of governmental and institutional buildings constructed during the era of the U. S. Public Works Administration. An example of the Stripped-Classical Moderne, the building is developed, both in plan and section, on a set-back parti. Abstractly conceived as a composition of blocky masses, the building recedes in area as it ascends in height. The central tower rises sheer from ground to parapet, while on either side of the major axis (running from east to west through the center of the building) two tiers of paired set-back blocks advance forward to grip the flanks of the tower. These tiers consist of two ground floor double height outer blocks which almost completely envelope two four-floor inner blocks. The central tower contains ten floors, as well as a mechanical penthouse. The City Hall is situated on a raised terrace, beneath which a basement is concealed. Although historical allusions are minimized, the composition follows academic principles. The rear (Bagby Street, west) facade replicates the front (Hermann Square, east) facade, while the two side elevations (facing Walker Avenue on the north and McKinney Avenue on the south) are identical.

The City Hall is supported on a steel frame, sheathed with a curtain-wall of rough sawn Texas Cardova shell limestone. A favorite Moderne device is the treatment of the windows: they are sunk in continuous vertical channels deeply grooved between unbroken expanses of limestone. In setting stamped aluminum spandrel panels flush with the aluminum window frames a contrast is elicited between the plane of the wall and the recessed plane of the fenestration, reiterating the theme of verticality expressed in the set-back massing. The allocation and character of the decorative work is informed by a similar effort at formal integration and compositional reinforcement. Rectangular panels in low relief depicting allegorical representations of agriculture, industry, and civic service occur, respectively. Above the fenestration strips at the first, fourth, and tenth floor level set backs. Chamfered panels above the front and rear entries and their flanking windows likewise bear low-relief figural sculpture. Engaged pylons terminate in sculptured figures, bounding the outermost sides of the flanking windows. The exterior carving, designed and executed by Herring Coe with Raoul Jasset, is representational, but of an abstract, architectural character.

The most flamboyant exterior decoration consists of the elaborate aluminum grills facing the four sets of entry doors and the tall, plate glass transoms above them. The transom screens bear roundels stamped with the likeness of "famous lawgivers" which are framed with an open-work pattern of intersection rectangles. This pattern recurs in the glazed panels of the entry doors, highlighted by the insertion of multiple chevrons. A more subdued reticular pattern frames the double-height windows flanking the front and rear entries, and the three double-height windows of the Council Room, just above the front entry.

B. Description of the Interior

The main public spaces are located along the major axis on the ground floor, and consist of a main lobby, an elevator lobby and a stair vestibule rear foyer. The lobby (approximately 35' x 50') is flanked by public service departments to either side. The upper half is transversely penetrated by portals, which constitute an enfilade along the minor axis (running through the side entries). These two portals -- each split in half by a structural column, are set into shallow square-headed niches, which are duplicated in the lower half of the lobby by paired recesses of similar dimensions, thus giving the longitudinal walls a symmetrical aspect. The central element on each of these walls is a protruding semi-hexagonal block, also set in a shallow niche, containing a drinking fountain. The lobby walls are surfaced with polished honey-taned travertine. The recesses and the fountain blocks are surfaced with Montana rose marble while the structural columns are sheathed in a fluted, dark Oriental red marble. Bronze canopies crown each of the niches and their pattern (facets set on a polished fascia) is repeated on the elevator door surrounds and the armature of the glazed vestibule just inside the front doors. The paving is terrazzo, bordered by rectangular strips of Montana rose and Verde Antigua marbles. From a raised nickel shield set in the center of the lobby floor radiate two overlapping sunbursts (one in Montana rose, the other in Verde Antigua), circumscribed by a band of Verde Antigua.

The ceiling of the lobby is caved at the perimeter. On the four faces appear allegorical murals representing Culture, Industry, Social Activities and Municipal Activities. These were painted in oil by Daniel MacMarris of Kansas City, in a light grisaille, with highlights in pastels and gilt applique. In the center of the ceiling is a recessed rectangular panel. Depending from it is a convex plaster relief map of the Western Hemisphere -- with the geographical location of Houston marked by a Lane Star -- surrounded by a furled plaster ribbon bearing the signs of the Zodiac. These devices are back-lit with concealed fluorescent fixtures. MacMarris artistic embellishments continue into the ceilings of the elevator lobby and of the stair hall, where however, they are completely eclipsed by the marvelous Streamline stair rail. Composed of four broad, flat,

parallel bands of aluminum, it effects both horizontal and vertical transitions without vertical support, the stiles being relegated to intermediate positions on the stringers. The continuous circuit of aluminum is reinforced by continuous speed-lines painted on the exposed underside of the open stairway, tracing a pattern of unbroken ascent.

As most spaces within the building are used for clerical purposes, finishes are simple. However, both the Council Room, on the second floor, and the Mayor's Offices, on the third floor, are of notable aspect. The Council Room (approximately 40' x 70') is directly above the front entrance and is marked on the exterior by three double-height windows overlooking Hermann Square. The room is situated with its long dimension parallel to the transverse (minor) axis so that entrance is effected through a set of four doors, opening off the elevator lobby, which lead to midway into the public seating area. Seating for two hundred people is arranged on either side of a central aisle, facing the Council table at the southern extreme of the room. The walls are faced with bland walnut, book matched in square panels. Doors and windows are set into recesses which have been paneled with a darker shade of walnut. Hanging from the coved ceilings are specially designed incandescent diffusers. The Mayor's Office and ante-room are both paneled in finely-grained walnut, laid horizontally and separated by metal strips, again adducing a note of the Streamlined. The elevator lobbies on the upper floors present a stunning contrast between the somber Oriental red marble wall surfaces and strippled white and black terrazzo paving. Fire doors, between the stair hall and the upper-floor lobbies are of aluminum decorated with relief panels.

C. Site

Houston City Hall faces east onto Hermann Square and is an axis with a long rectangular reflecting pool in that park. The grounds were landscaped in 1940 by S. Arai of the Japanese Nursery after plans by the landscape architects. The completed project included planting of 45 live oak trees, 7000 Yupan bushes along walks, and installation of an underground water sprinkling system, stone benches and stone plant boxes. Grassy areas on either side of the reflecting pool are bordered by hedges around the perimeter of the park.

PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings:

1. File Room, Department of Public Works, City Hall Annex. Various Plans on Sepia. 1937-1939.
2. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library
 - a) Hore & Hare Collection (RGD 26) various drawings 1924-1940

B. Early Views

Houston Chronicle. December 18, 1927. early rendering.

Houston Press. July 17, 1939. "Fence is Down! Look at the New City Hall." earliest published photograph

Houston Directory and Municipal Guide, 1940. Early interior and exterior photographs. (see supplemental materials for copy)

Photographic collection Houston Metropolitan Research Center. Houston Public Library.

C. Bibliography

I. Primary Sources

Alfred C. Finn Collection. Houston Metropolitan Research Center. Houston Public Library

Hare and Hare Collection. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

"Houston Architectural Survey." Prepared by the Southwest Center for Urban Research for the City of Houston and the Texas Historical Commission. (Draft Copy) 1980. Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

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National Register Nomination Form. "Houston City Hall" prepared by Stephen Fox and Drexel Turner.

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2. Secondary Sources

Architectural Record. Vol 86, n 5 (November 1939). p. 14.

Houston. July 1938, May 1956

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Houston: WPA, 1942.

Houston: An Architectural Guide. Peter C. Papademetriou,
editor. Houston: Houston Chapter, AIA, 1972.

Houston Chronicle

25 December 1937
27 June 1938
17 July 1938
1 October 1938
25 December 1938
31 December 1938
8 June 1939
5 November 1939
3 December 1939
6 December 1939
30 December 1939
6 February 1953
12 January 1967
21 March 1973
12 February 1981

Houston City Directory. various years

Houston Post (including Houston Daily Post and Houston Post-Dispatch)

13 May 1929
3 March 1929
28 September 1937
14 October 1937
22 October 1937
26 October 1937
27 October 1937
2 October 1938
25 October 1938
3 December 1939
5 December 1939
4 September 1949

Houston Press

24 March 1928
29 December 1929
24 August 1937

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Houston, The Boyou City. David G. McCamb. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969.

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The Moderne Style in Architecture: A Houston Guide. Yolita Schmidt. Houston: Houston Public Library, 1978.

Tulso Art Deco: An Architectural Era 1925-1945. The Junior of Tulso, Inc. Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1980.

Who's Who In Texas, 1931. Emory E. Boiley, editor.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

Further information can be found in the minutes of the City Council, Houston, Texas.

Since the mid-1970s the Mayor's news conferences have been recorded and these tapes are available at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library.

E. Supplemental Material (SM)

- * 1. Images of the earlier courthouses located on Market Square.
 - a. 1841
 - b. 1872
 - c. 1876
 - d. 1904
- * 2. Images of the four schemes for City Hall that were not adopted.
 - a. 1923
 - b. circa 1925
 - c. circa 1928
 - d. 1929
- * 3. Original plans for the Houston Civic Center
 - a. circa 1925
 - b. circa 1928
 - c. 1938
 - d. 1939
- * 4. Early Images of Houston City Hall
 - a. Architect's rendering, published 12-18-37
 - b. Photograph published 7-17-39

- * 5. Press release from Joseph Finger, Inc., Architects entitled "Inscriptions and interpretation of symbolic sculptured panels and murals."
- * 6. Excerpt from Tulsa Art Deco: An Architectural Era 1925-1945. This is the most recent exposition on this style of architecture.
- * 7. Houston Directory and Municipal Guide, 1940. "Commemorating Houston's New City Hall."

Prepared by Barrie Scardino, formerly
an architectural archivist with the
Houston Metropolitan Research Center,
Houston Public Library

* Filed in Field Records for Houston City Hall